Gene therapy leukemia treatments approval expected by end of 2017

The approval of gene therapy for leukemia, expected in the next few months, will open the door to a radically new class of cancer treatments.

Companies and universities are racing to develop these new therapies, which re-engineer and turbocharge millions of a patient's own immune cells, turning them into cancer killers that researchers call a "living drug." One of the big goals now is to get them to work for many other cancers, including those of the breast, prostate, ovary, lung and pancreas.

…

Studies are forging ahead on many fronts. Researchers plan to try giving the cell treatment to children with earlier stages of leukemia than in the past, combining it with other treatments and developing new types of cell therapy.

…

"We could deploy the treatment considerably earlier and before they get so sick," said [Dr. Stephan Grupp, director of the cancer immunotherapy program at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia], "That is another big step in terms of trying to figure out how to use these cells appropriately."

Earlier treatment, he said, might help some patients avoid bone-marrow transplant, a grueling, last-ditch treatment. Children with less advanced disease also tend to have milder side effects from the T-cell treatment.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: Companies Rush to Develop 'Utterly Transformative' Gene Therapies